

Friendship Heights TMD Advisory Committee Meeting

Summary – Meeting of February 10, 2009

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Voting Members Present

April Birnbaum	Lerch, Early and Brewer, Representing New England Development
William P. Farley	Town of Somerset
David Glass	Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers
Mary Herman	Polinger Shannon and Luchs (Employer of greater than 50)
Gregory Knoop	Oudens Knoop Knoop + Sachs Architects (Employer of fewer than 50)
Bill McCloskey	Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights
Jessica Moore	The JBG Companies
Robert Schwarzbart (Chair)	Friendship Heights Village Council
R. Mallory Starr (Vice Chair)	Somerset House Management Association
David Viertels	EagleBank (Employer of fewer than 50)
Kenneth Williams	GEICO

Non-Voting Members Present

Sandra L. Brecher	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
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TMD Staff Present

Jim Carlson	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
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Absent

Chief Roy Gordon	Chevy Chase Village Police
Leonard Grant	Friendship Heights Village Council
Capt. Russell Hamill	Montgomery County Police
Charles Kines	M-NCPPC
N. Leslie Olson	Chevy Chase Land Company
Carlean Russell	Saks Fifth Avenue (Employer of greater than 50)

Guests

Fred Delacruz	Saks Fifth Avenue
Tiffany Gee	Chevy Chase Land Company
Bob Joiner	The Agenda News
Julian Mansfield	Village of Friendship Heights
Michael Sherman	WMATA

Items 1,2,3 – Introductions, Review Approval of January’s minutes, Chair’s Comments. Members and guests introduced themselves.

The minutes from the January meeting were approved.

Robert Schwarzbart stated that at the last meeting there had been some discussion centered on the TRiPS Commuter Store and the kinds of items that would be available. Since the January meeting, **Mr. Schwarzbart** visited a number of retail outlets, including several CVS Stores and Giants, but was unable to buy a Senior SmarTrip Card at any of

those facilities. He was able to locate just one Giant that had a limited supply of regular SmarTrip cards, but no Senior SmarTrip cards.

Mr. Schwarzbart was finally able to purchase his Senior SmarTrip card at the Metro Center station, with presentation of proper ID (driver's license). In order to buy one for his wife, he was told he must bring her ID information plus a notarized letter.

Mr. Schwarzbart stated that his experience in locating an outlet that sells Senior SmarTrip illustrates the benefit of having a commuter store in the community.

William Farley asked if the purchase could be done online. **Ms. Brecher** answered that since Senior SmarTrip provides a significant discount on fares, there would be the potential for fraud; identification information must be verified at the point of sale.

David Glass stated that one alternative to having a commuter store sell Senior SmarTrip and other items would be to supply Giant and CVS with the cards and provide the necessary training to their employees. Montgomery County could work with Metro to supply the necessary numbers of passes and SmarTrip cards to these other outlets.

Ms. Brecher added that the Senior SmarTrip cards are sold at some public libraries. She did not recall which specific libraries were selected; as there is no library in Friendship Heights, residents will have to find the nearest one, possibly Bethesda or Chevy Chase (8005 Connecticut Ave.).

[Confirmed after the meeting that all public libraries sell Senior SmarTrip]

Mr. Schwarzbart stated that **Julian Mansfield** and his staff have arranged for Metro personnel to visit the Village Center on Thursday, March 12, from 2 to 5 p.m., to make a presentation about Senior SmarTrip cards and to sell them on site. All who are interested are encouraged to attend.

Mr. Schwarzbart announced that the Friendship Heights Village Council had approved the purchase of a new shuttle bus from the current contractor. Delivery is expected late in 2009.

Mr. Schwarzbart thanked **Mallory Starr**, along with **Sande Brecher** and **Jim Carlson** for attending the February 3rd meeting with the County Executive and presenting the Advisory Committee's FY10 budget recommendations.

Mr. Schwarzbart announced that **Gwen Ifill**, moderator and managing editor of WETA's "Washington Week," who had been scheduled to appear at the Village Center on February 7th, canceled her appearance due to a death in the family. She has rescheduled her appearance for Saturday, March 14th, at 3 p.m.

Bill McCloskey stated that the building permits displayed in the TRiPS store window had expired dates. **Ms. Brecher** answered that she would check into it.

[Confirmed the expired certificates were for interior work that had been completed, not work currently underway – the certificates were removed. Copies on file with Commuter Services.]

Item 4 – Teleconference with Zipcar DC General Manager Ellice Perez: **Ms. Perez** introduced herself and provided an overview of Zipcar (handouts with the Power Point presentation were distributed to the committee):

- Zipcar was established in 1999, based in Boston.
- Zipcar merged with Flexcar in 2007, and covers 13 major metropolitan markets and about 100 universities.
- Any Zipcar member may reserve any car, in any state.
- The network includes Canada and the U.K.
- Most people join Zipcar to save money; average savings about \$500 per year.
 - By giving up their cars, members avoid the costs of gas, insurance, maintenance, registration and other expenses.

- Zipcar provides convenience by being in many cities and at many different locations.

Ms. Perez explained features of the enrollment process and the benefits of membership:

- There is a short online application.
- New members are issued a Zipcard and can immediately reserve a car.
- Reservations are by phone or online. A signal is sent to the Zipcar when reserved.
- Members' Zipcards identify them and unlock the car door. Keys are always inside.
- Members return the car to its space when finished.

David Glass asked how much it costs to join Zipcar. **Ms. Perez** said that for individuals the cost is \$50 per year, and there is a \$25 application fee.

David Viertels asked about the time allotments allowed for the vehicles and how are they priced. **Ms. Perez** answered that vehicles are used for a minimum of one hour, and can be used for up to four days. The cost is based on the three classes of vehicles listed on the handout, which include 'good,' 'better' and 'best.' The good and better class vehicles are rented for \$8.25 per hour; the best class is \$13.25 per hour. These are business rates; for a personal account, the amount starts at \$9.25 per hour.

Mr. Viertels asked if there is a discount for using a certain number of hours. **Ms. Perez** said there is a 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. rate of \$49 plus a 24-hour rate of \$60.

Mr. Schwarzbart asked how road service is handled. Roadside assistance is available 24-hours a day through an 800 number.

Greg Knoop asked how gas is handled. Members put gas in the tank. Reservations include 180 free miles. Cars must be returned with at least one quarter of the tank full. There is a gas card in all cars and it is honored at all major stations. Since the only guideline is to return the car with one quarter of a tank, people who make short trips very seldom find the need to stop for gas.

Ms. Perez added that members should do a walk-around of the vehicle before use, there is no smoking allowed in the vehicles and pets must be in carriers. There is a \$50 late charge. Cars are assigned to specific spaces and must be returned to that space. If you reserve a car and it has not been returned to its space in time, Zipcar will get you to the next closest location by cab, and charge the driver who did not return the car on time.

Mr. Schwarzbart asked how many cars are in a given location as a rule. **Ms. Perez** stated that it depends on the location – the Chinatown location has about 150 cars; the Bethesda area has 30 to 50 cars at any given time.

Sande Brecher noted that one can see how many cars are available and their locations by going to the Zipcar web site (<http://www.zipcar.com/dc/find-cars>). **Ms. Brecher** asked how many cars are available in the Friendship Heights area. **Ms. Perez** said she would check the web site. **Bill McCloskey** interjected that he had checked and found that there were two cars within walking distance of the Metro station. **Mr. McCloskey** asked if there were plans to expand that number. **Ms. Perez** said the demand had not been high for any more vehicles in Friendship Heights.

Mr. Glass asked if there had been any difficulty in finding parking spaces when more cars were added to meet demand. **Ms. Perez** said it generally has not been difficult, since many buildings provide the spaces as a tenant amenity.

William Farley asked how the vehicles are tracked. The cars are tracked by means of a proprietary technology; the technology also allows Zipcar to track maintenance needs, such as oil changes and other routine issues. Members' Zipcards are scanned in and out at precise times, so the company knows the exact time the car has been checked out and returned. **Mr. Farley** observed that if the age demographic is a factor in how Zipcar serves a community, then

Friendship Heights may be more difficult to penetrate due to the older average age of the residents. **Ms. Perez** stated that it is mainly proximity to public transportation and surveys that determine viability – age is usually not a factor.

Mr. Knoop asked if Zipcar would be transitioning to more fuel efficient vehicles, such as hybrids. **Ms. Perez** stated that ten percent of the fleet consists of hybrids. Hybrids have not been in great demand, possibly due to the different way that they operate. For instance, it is disconcerting for those who have not driven a hybrid to have the engine cut off at stops. The fuel standard for all vehicles is to get at least 28 miles per gallon.

Jessica Moore said the JBG building tenants had recently been declined a Zipcar. Tenants have been asking why. Can Zipcar revisit the issue? **Ms. Perez** agreed to do some more research and contact **Ms. Moore**.

Mr. Schwarzbart asked how many miles are usually put on a vehicle before it is replaced. Vehicles are in use for three years or 65,000 miles, whichever comes first. Cars are then sent to auction.

Mallory Starr noted that on one of the slides, the cost of construction for a new parking space is between \$35,000 and \$50,000. Does the developer pay that cost? **Ms. Perez** said that the dollar figure, available from the U.S. Department of Transportation, was used as an illustration to show how much money MIT saved in construction costs because they did not need as much parking using Zipcar. The average ratio for a shared vehicle like Zipcar is 43 people per vehicle, instead of one car per one or two people.

Ms. Brecher asked if there was any survey data from commercial buildings indicating a level of interest in car sharing. Earlier surveys done by Zipcar of residential buildings had shown very high interest in living in a location with access to Zipcar. **Ms. Perez** said that no survey had been done, but it would be relatively easy design one. **Ms. Brecher** also asked how drivers' records are monitored and updated. Zipcar does not do an annual check, but there are certain rules stipulated in the contract. Also, members who get tickets while in a Zipcar are liable for paying the fines; since the tickets come to Zipcar, the company can monitor driver behavior and decide whether the driver is still eligible for the standard insurance coverage, or if membership should be revoked.

Ms. Brecher asked if there are vehicles available for disabled drivers. Yes - Zipcar has vehicles fitted with hand controls.

Item 5 – Mr. Carlson introduced **Michael Sherman**, WMATA. **Mr. Sherman** is a Roving Executive and plans to attend future TMD meetings, or to send a representative. **Mr. Schwarzbart** asked if Metro was close to a decision to shut down service at 10 p.m. as a cost cutting move. **Mr. Sherman** said he had heard of this proposal, but it is not his area of specialty. He would be glad to come back with additional information on this and other issues. Customer comments to WMATA, however, indicate strong resistance to the idea of limiting service. **Ms. Brecher** asked if Senior SmarTrip cards were available at the Western Avenue bus garage; **Mr. Sherman** said he believed that all passes were sold there.

Item 6 – Budget Priorities Meeting with CE: **Mr. Schwarzbart** thanked **Mallory Starr** for attending the February 3 meeting and presenting the committee's budget priorities to **Mr. Leggett**. **Mr. Schwarzbart** was unable to attend due to a long-standing engagement. **Mr. Schwarzbart** and **Mr. Carlson** met after the January meeting to draft the cover letter and make the committee's recommended changes to the priorities list. They were joined by former TMD AC member **Bob Cope**, who lent his approval to the final wording of the letters to DDOT (Item 7) regarding the turn lane on Jennifer Street and the Western Avenue crosswalk at Lord & Taylor. The cover letter and budget priorities documents are included in the meeting packet.

Ms. Brecher added that the County Executive greatly appreciates the time and energy that committee members put into their issues, although he may not always have the same fiscal priorities. **Mr. Leggett** takes the annual meetings seriously, as evidenced by the people in attendance: **CAO Tim Firestine**; **Connie Latham** who oversees the County's Boards, Committees and Commissions; and **Beth Gochrach**, who works in **Connie Latham's** office.

Item 7 – DDOT Projects: Two letters drafted to DDOT, included in the meeting packet, are in response to concerns raised by **Mr. Cope** and approved at the December meeting. The first letter requests that the lane-turning indicator arrows on Jennifer Street be changed so that the right lane permits both right turns onto Western Avenue and through traffic proceeding northbound on Friendship Boulevard. The left lane should be a left-turn only lane. The second letter recommends that DDOT provide a striped crosswalk from the Western Avenue curb by Lord & Taylor at its intersection with Jennifer Street, across to the entranceway of the GEICO property.

Also included in the packet is an email response from DDOT regarding the placement of the trash receptacle at the Western Avenue-River Road bus shelter to a location that does not impede the movement of wheelchairs. Movement of the receptacle now allows 44 inches of sidewalk access in front of the shelter.

Mr. Carlson said that **Jeffrey Jennings**, the Ward 3 DDOT Coordinator, had moved to a new position since the writing of the letters. They will be forwarded to his replacement.

Item 8 – Meeting Minutes Format: **Mr. Schwarzbart** suggested that meeting minutes be more concise, omitting some verbatim dialogue, and note action items and votes taken, but allow for expanded comments at the request of individual members when the subject under discussion warrants more detail.

The committee voted to stay with the current minutes format and allow **Mr. Carlson** to continue to exercise judgment regarding content and format. Six members voted to keep the present format; four voted for the more concise minutes, but with expanded comments to be included at member request. **Mr. Carlson** said that this is largely the case now, as there are certain comments, such as a dissenting voice regarding the need for the Commuter Store, which are usually included in each minutes summary when it comes up.

Item 9 – Other Business: **Mr. Carlson** sent a flyer regarding Metro and Ride On fare changes to employers (letter included in meeting packet).

Meeting adjourned at 10:10 AM
Next meeting date: March 10, 2009